9: Lasker D-5 (1948)1953 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

By GABRIEL W. LASKER

Ethnic Identification in an Indian Mestizo Community[1]

II. RACIAL CHARACTERISTICS

114 KAPLAN has shown that whether individuals are considered to be Indians or Mestizos is primarily a cultural matter.[2] She reports the answers of a group studied in the Mexican town of Paracho, Michoacán to the question: "Are your parents Indians, Mestizos or what?" Such criteria as place of birth and language rather than physical appearance feature in the explanations.

141 For the same group for whom Kaplan has published data on the stated race of the parents, I have made a series of measurements and observations of racial characteristics. Both so-called Indians (148 males and 85 females) and Mestizos (135 males and 95 females) were examined. The Indians consist of persons both of whose parents are described as Tarascans, Indians or natives (*natural*). The Mestizos comprise individuals one or both of whose parents are described as white, Spanish (*gente de razon*), or mixed.

TABLE 1

RACIAL MEASUREMENTS BY ETHNIC GROUP

		Males			Females		
		No.	Mean	Standard Error	No.	Mean	Standard Error
Cephalic Index	Indian	146	77.8	0.3	83	78.6	0.3
	Mestizo	135	78.2	0.3	93	78.2	0.4
Bizygomatic Diameter	Indian	148	137.2 mm	0.4	85	129.8 mm	0.5
	Mestizo	96	136.3 mm	0.5	95	130.5 mm	0.5
Total Facial Index	Indian	148	90.1	0.5	85	90.2	0.6
	Mestizo	135	91.1	0.5	94	90.0	0.5
Upper Facial Index	Indian	130	53.9	0.3	74	54.6	0.5
	Mestizo	129	54.4	0.3	87	54.2	0.4
Stature	Indian	145	1618.4 mm	4.8	84	1513.9 mm	5.0
	Mestizo	132	1628.9 mm	4.7	93	1516.1 mm	5.0

Various physical traits are considered in respect to which Europeans differ from American Indian and other Mongoloid peoples. In the Mexican town under study, however, the children of persons identified as Indian and Mestizo differ little in these features. None of the differences between Indians and Mestizos in the measurements or indices considered shows a statistically significant critical ratio (see table 1). There is, for instance,

[1] Aided by a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.
[2] Bernice A. Kaplan, "Ethnic Identification in an Indian Mestizo Community. I. Socio-Cultural Factors," PAPLON, XIV, No. 2, 179.

1 [See B. Kaplan, this File.] 187 Analyst

9: Lasker D-5 (1948)1953 NU34 Tarasco NU34
Sierra Tarascans

no significant difference in head form as measured by the average cephalic index. Also, although facial breadth is characteristically wider in Mongoloids than in other peoples, the Indians of each sex in this series are not broader in the face than the Mestizos — either in respect to bizygomatic diameter or when this is taken as a ratio of the total facial height — or of the upper facial height. When it comes to stature, however, the Indians of both sexes tend to be shorter on the average than the respective Mestizos. A previous study indicates that differences in stature are found between individuals in the same series who had spent some of their formative years as temporary migrants to the United States and those who had remained in Mexico.[3] Such differences represent the effects of milieu. It is quite possible, therefore, that any variations in stature between so-called Indians and Mestizos are also due to factors in their conditions of life — especially diet — rather than to any inherited racial differences between the two groups.

Most of the traits which would be expected to distinguish American Indians from Europeans are descriptive attributes which have been counted rather than measured. Among these are dark brown eyes, black hair, straight hair, prominent cheek bones (malars), and markedly concave front teeth (shovel-shaped incisors). These traits are in fact slightly more common in the Indians than in the Mestizos (See figures 1-5). Among males, all five of these characteristics are found in 33 per cent of 97 Indians, but they also occur in 19 per cent of 100 Mestizos. The only males to lack all five factors are four of the 100 Mestizos. For the females the five characters are all found in 29 per cent of 55 Indians and in 21 per cent of 72 Mestizos. None of the females examined lacked all of these Mongoloid traits. As far as these particular features are concerned most of the members of the community, whether regarded as Indians or not, show some Indian characteristics.

There are other conditions which are considered Mongoloid. A fold of the upper eyelid which covers the inner corner of the free lash-bearing margin (internal epicanthic fold) is one of them. General deficiency of facial and bodily hair is another such trait. Jutting of the teeth (prognathism) is a third. As will be seen in figures 6-8, however, neither eyefolds, mid-digital hair on the back of the fingers, nor prognathism differentiates Indians from Mestizos in this group of Mexicans.

A higher proportion of the persons categorized as Indians falls in the older age groups. As some traits are affected by age, it is necessary to make allowance for this factor. For instance, eyefolds tend to shift from internal to external types with age; yet age by age in this series similar proportions of the various types are found in Indians and Mestizos.

[3] Gabriel W. Lasker, "Environmental Growth Factors and Selective Migration," Human Biology, 24: 262-269 (1952).